

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #0012 0042226
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 042226Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8789
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 000012

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#)

SUBJECT: Salvadoran Legislative Assembly Authorizes Tenth Contingent to Iraq

[¶1.](#) (U) Summary: Based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1790, the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly voted to extend authorization for Salvadoran troops to remain in Iraq. The authorization was extended until June 2009 in an attempt to keep the Iraq deployment from coming up for reauthorization during national elections scheduled for early 2009. The tenth Salvadoran military contingent is scheduled to deploy to Iraq in February 2008. El Salvador is the only Latin America country that has maintained troops in Iraq since August 2003, despite significant public opposition. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (U) On December 20, during its last plenary session of 2007, the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly voted to renew the Legislative Decree authorizing Salvadoran troops in Iraq. The ruling National Republican Alliance Party (ARENA) and its allies, the National Conciliation Party (PCN) and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), pushed to extend the decree until June 30, 2009 in an attempt to keep the Iraq deployment from becoming an issue in municipal, legislative, and presidential elections set for January and March [¶2009](#).

[¶3.](#) (U) The Iraq decree passed with 46 votes from ARENA, PCN, and PDC deputies. There were 31 votes against the decree by deputies representing the opposition Faribundo Marti National Liberation Party (FMLN) and 2 abstentions from the Democratic Change Party (CD). Guillermo Gallegos, ARENA Chief of Faction in the Assembly, said during the plenary debate that renewal of the decree was based on UN Security Council resolution 1790 calling for continued multinational military efforts in Iraq. Carlos Castaneda of the FMLN reminded his colleagues of the five Salvadoran soldiers who have died in Iraq.

[¶4.](#) (U) U.S and Salvadoran military sources have confirmed that the tenth military contingent from the Cuscatlan Battalion is scheduled to deploy in February 2008 to replace the 280 Salvadoran soldiers who are currently stationed in Al Kut, south of Baghdad.

[¶5.](#) (U) COMMENT: El Salvador has maintained troops in Iraq since August 2003, despite significant public opposition. A December 2007 poll from the Public Institute of the University of Central American (UCA) revealed that 83.4 percent of Salvadorans do not agree with President Saca's decision to send troops to Iraq. The Assembly's decision to put off a future debate on reauthorization until after the 2009 elections may succeed in moving this issue to the back burner during the elections, but any further votes on troop deployment, will be dependent on the outcome of both the presidential and legislative contests. End Comment.